

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Currently Amended) ~~A computer-implemented~~ The method for enabling
~~perception of multiple online personas in an instant messaging communications session, the~~
~~method comprising of claim 80 wherein:~~

~~rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, an instant messaging application~~
~~user interface for an instant messaging communications session involving at least one potential~~
~~instant messaging recipient and a single potential instant messaging sender;~~

~~sending a message that includes a text message and a persona selected among multiple~~
~~possible personas associated with the instant messaging sender to be displayed by the potential~~
~~instant messaging recipient when displaying the text message, the selected persona comprising a~~
~~collection of one or more self-expression items and a sender avatar capable of being animated;~~
~~and~~

~~rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona comprises~~
~~rendering, the selected persona at the potential~~ on an instant messaging recipient system, the
accessed persona while ~~when rendering another a portion of the a message received from the~~
instant messaging sender.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 wherein storing, for each of
the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant
messaging recipient comprises:

~~the sender persona is selected by the receiving from the instant messaging sender, for each of from the multiple possible personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential associated with the instant messaging sender recipient; and~~
storing the received associations.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 wherein the accessed persona is rendered before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 wherein the accessed persona is rendered after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 further comprising defining one or more personas.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising:
assigning a first persona to a first potential instant messaging recipient so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session ~~involving~~ between the instant messaging sender and the first potential instant messaging recipient; and

assigning a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session ~~involving~~ between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[31]]~~ 30 further comprising:

assigning a first persona to a first group of potential instant messaging recipients so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected in an instant messaging communications session ~~involving~~ between the instant messaging sender and a member of the first group of potential instant messaging recipients; and

assigning a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session ~~involving~~ between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 further comprising disabling use of one of the multiple personas.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 33 wherein disabling use of one of the multiple personas comprises disabling use of one of the multiple personas based on the instant messaging recipient.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 wherein:
one of the multiple different personas comprise a work persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at a work location associated with the instant messaging sender, and

one of the multiple different personas comprise a home persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at home,

the method further comprising:

determining whether the instant messaging sender is at home or at the work location;

in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at home, selecting the home persona for use in the instant messaging communications session; and

in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at the work location, selecting the work persona for use in the instant messaging communications session.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 25 ~~further comprising~~ 80 wherein storing, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient comprises selecting a persona to be displayed by the potential instant messaging recipient storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a time of day, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 25 ~~further comprising~~ 80 wherein storing, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient comprises selecting a persona to be displayed by the potential instant messaging recipient storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a day of week, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 25 ~~further comprising~~ 80 wherein storing, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient comprises selecting a persona to be displayed by the potential instant messaging recipient storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a group of potential instant messaging recipients that are associated with the at least one potential instant messaging recipient, an association between the persona and the at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a first group of potential instant messaging recipients, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a second group of potential

instant messaging recipients that differs from the first group of potential instant messaging recipients.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[25]]~~ 80 wherein at least some of characteristics of a persona may be transparent to the instant messaging sender.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~25~~ wherein 80 further comprising animating the sender avatar is animated to send an out-of-band communication from the instant messaging sender to the potential instant messaging recipient.

41. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the out-of-band communication comprises a communication indicating an environmental condition associated with the instant messaging sender.

42. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein the environmental condition comprises an environmental condition related to weather occurring in a geographic location near the instant messaging sender.

43. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the out-of-band communication comprises a communication indicating a personality characteristic associated with the instant messaging sender.

44. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the out-of-band communication comprises a communication indicating an emotional state associated with the instant messaging sender.

45. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the out-of-band communication comprises a communication indicating a setting characteristic associated with the instant messaging sender.

46. (Original) The method of claim 45 wherein the setting characteristic comprises a characteristic related to time of day of the instant messaging sender.

47. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the setting characteristic comprises a characteristic related to time of year.

48. (Original) The method of claim 47 wherein the time of year comprises a holiday.

49. (Original) The method of claim 47 wherein the time of year comprises a season wherein the season is one of spring, summer, fall or winter.

50. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the setting characteristic comprises a characteristic associated with a work setting.

51. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the setting characteristic comprises a characteristic associated with a recreation setting.

52. (Original) The method of claim 51 wherein the recreation setting comprises a beach setting or a tropical setting.

53. (Original) The method of claim 52 wherein the recreation setting comprises a winter sport setting.

54. – 79. (Cancelled)

80. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for enabling perception of multiple online personas in an instant messaging communications session, the method comprising:

receiving, from an instant messaging sender, an indication of multiple different personas associated with the instant messaging sender, each of the personas comprising a sender avatar

capable of being animated and a collection of self-expression items reflecting preferences of the sender ~~and a sender avatar capable of being animated;~~

storing the multiple personas in one or more data structures;

storing, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient;

initiating an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and a particular potential instant messaging recipient;

accessing the stored association between ~~the persona and~~ the particular potential instant messaging recipient and a corresponding one of the stored personas associated with the instant messaging recipient;

~~selecting, based on the accessed association, one of the multiple personas associated with the instant messaging sender;~~ and

rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed selected persona as the persona for the instant message sender during communications involving the instant message sender and the particular potential instant messaging recipient.

81. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 80 wherein the multiple personas are associated with a single screen name of the instant messaging sender.

82. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 80 wherein the multiple personas received are modified personas.

83. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 80 wherein the self-expression items comprise one or more of a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.

84. (New) A computer-readable medium having embodied thereon a computer program configured to communicate, the medium comprising one or more code segments configured to:

receive, from an instant messaging sender, an indication of multiple different personas associated with the instant messaging sender, each of the personas comprising a sender avatar

capable of being animated and a collection of self-expression items reflecting preferences of the sender;

store the multiple personas in one or more data structures;

store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient;

initiate an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and a particular potential instant messaging recipient;

access the stored association between the particular potential instant messaging recipient and a corresponding one of the stored personas associated with the instant messaging recipient; and

render, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona as the persona for the instant message sender during communications involving the instant message sender and the particular potential instant messaging recipient.

85. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to render, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona by rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona while rendering a portion of a message received from the instant messaging sender.

86. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by:

receiving from the instant messaging sender, for each of the multiple possible personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient; and storing the received associations.

87. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the accessed persona is rendered before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

88. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the accessed persona is rendered after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

89. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to define one or more personas.

90. (New) The medium of claim 89 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to:

assign a first persona to a first potential instant messaging recipient so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the first potential instant messaging recipient; and

assign a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

91. (New) The medium of claim 90 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to:

assign a first persona to a first group of potential instant messaging recipients so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and a member of the first group of potential instant messaging recipients; and

assign a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

92. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to disable use of one of the multiple personas.

93. (New) The medium of claim 92 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to disable use of one of the multiple personas by disabling use of one of the multiple personas based on the instant messaging recipient.

94. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein:
one of the multiple different personas comprise a work persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at a work location associated with the instant messaging sender, and
one of the multiple different personas comprise a home persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at home,
the one or more code segments being further configured to:
determine whether the instant messaging sender is at home or at the work location;
in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at home, select the home persona for use in the instant messaging communications session; and
in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at the work location, select the work persona for use in the instant messaging communications session.

95. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a time of day, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

96. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a day of week, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

97. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a group of potential instant messaging recipients that are associated with at least one potential instant messaging recipient, an association between the persona and the at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a first group of potential instant messaging recipients, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a second group of potential instant messaging recipients that differs from the first group of potential instant messaging recipients.

98. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein at least some of characteristics of a persona may be transparent to the instant messaging sender.

99. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the multiple personas are associated with a single screen name of the instant messaging sender.

100. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the multiple personas received are modified personas.

101. (New) The medium of claim 84 wherein the self-expression items comprise one or more of a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.

102. (New) A system for communicating, the system comprising a processor connected to a storage device and one or more input/output devices, wherein the processor is configured to:

receive, from an instant messaging sender, an indication of multiple different personas associated with the instant messaging sender, each of the personas comprising a sender avatar capable of being animated and a collection of self-expression items reflecting preferences of the sender;

store the multiple personas in one or more data structures;

store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient;

initiate an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and a particular potential instant messaging recipient;

access the stored association between the particular potential instant messaging recipient and a corresponding one of the stored personas associated with the instant messaging recipient; and

render, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona as the persona for the instant message sender during communications involving the instant message sender and the particular potential instant messaging recipient.

103. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to render, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona by rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, the accessed persona while rendering a portion of a message received from the instant messaging sender.

104. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by:

receiving from the instant messaging sender, for each of the multiple possible personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient; and storing the received associations.

105. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the accessed persona is rendered before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

106. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the accessed persona is rendered after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

107. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to define one or more personas.

108. (New) The system of claim 107 wherein the processor is further configured to:
assign a first persona to a first potential instant messaging recipient so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the first potential instant messaging recipient; and

assign a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

109. (New) The system of claim 108 wherein the processor is further configured to:
assign a first persona to a first group of potential instant messaging recipients so that the first persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and a member of the first group of potential instant messaging recipients; and

assign a second persona to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an instant messaging communications session between the instant messaging sender and the second potential instant messaging recipient, wherein the second persona is at least partially distinguishable from the first persona.

110. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to disable use of one of the multiple personas.

111. (New) The system of claim 110 wherein the processor is further configured to disable use of one of the multiple personas by disabling use of one of the multiple personas based on the instant messaging recipient.

112. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein:
one of the multiple different personas comprise a work persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at a work location associated with the instant messaging sender, and

one of the multiple different personas comprise a home persona associated with presence of the instant messaging sender at home,

the processor being further configured to:

determine whether the instant messaging sender is at home or at the work location;

in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at home, select the home persona for use in the instant messaging communications session; and

in response to a determination that the instant messaging sender is at the work location, select the work persona for use in the instant messaging communications session.

113. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a time of day, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant

messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

114. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a day of week, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a first time period, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient during a second time period that differs from the first time period.

115. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the processor is further configured to store, for each of the multiple personas, an association between the persona and at least one potential instant messaging recipient by storing, for one or more of the multiple personas and based on a group of potential instant messaging recipients that are associated with at least one potential instant messaging recipient, an association between the persona and the at least one potential instant messaging recipient, where a first persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a first group of potential instant messaging recipients, and a second and different persona is stored for use in communications with the at least one instant messaging recipient associated with a second group of potential instant messaging recipients that differs from the first group of potential instant messaging recipients.

116. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein at least some of characteristics of a persona may be transparent to the instant messaging sender.

117. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the multiple personas are associated with a single screen name of the instant messaging sender.

118. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the multiple personas received are modified personas.

119. (New) The system of claim 102 wherein the self-expression items comprise one or more of a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.